

He Showed Up for Us God's Plan and Timing in Sending the Messiah

Due to increasing tensions between law enforcement officials and the communities they serve, police have begun to secure the assistance of professional clergy trained as police chaplains. These men and women, trained in skills such as eye contact, comforting touch, and active listening, accompany officers to critical incidents to bring “the ministry of presence.” Thank God for these public servants who show up at the crucial time in a capacity of empathy and help. They have been called “the heartbeat of the community.”¹

If God had showed up for the critical incident of the fall of humanity, His holy presence would have blotted us all out. This is why He sent Jesus, God incarnate, the embodiment of empathy. He took our fallen humanity upon His perfect divinity so that we could stand in the presence of the divine and yet live. Ah, but the Father had big part in all this. It was a unified decision to send Jesus. And it was a perfect decision. We will see this as we examine God's plan and God's timing in sending His Son to earth.

God's Plan

Can you imagine how the fall of humanity sent a shudder through the heavenly courts? The angels must have despaired of the future of the human race. But not God. According to the prophet Zechariah, the Father and Son formed a plan, or counsel, to send help:

Behold, the Man whose name is the Branch! From His place He shall branch out. And He shall build the temple of the Lord. Yes, He shall build the temple of the Lord. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne. So He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. Zechariah 6:12-13.

This prophecy says that Jesus, “the Branch,” would:

Branch Out, as in leave the heavenly courts, journeying to earth.

Build the Temple of the Lord, which is the church. Paul said to believers, “You are God's building” and “You are the temple of God” (See 1 Cor. 3:9, 16; Eph. 2:19-22, 1 Pet. 2:5, 1 Pet. 4:17).

Bear the Glory, glory meaning character. Jesus would shine forth the true character of God.

Be a Priest upon His Throne when He ascended to the right hand of the Father (See Matt. 25:31).

¹ <https://opus.lib.uts.edu.au/handle/2100/854>

because a day equals a year in prophecy, Daniel knew meant 2300 years. This confused him. He thought Israel would be in captivity 70 years. What was this 2300 years? Adding to the stress, Daniel didn't know when the prophecy began.

Daniel Chapter Nine records the heart-wrenching prayer born out of Daniel's anxiety—the longest prayer in the Bible. Read it! You'll see that the prophet pours out his soul before God, asking for mercy for Israel. He must be thinking, "God, do we have to wait 2300 years?" While Daniel prays, the angel Gabriel comes to him, "about the time of the evening offering" and tells him that he has come to give him "skill to understand" (vs. 21-22).

Often God uses an immediate concern to communicate a greater concern. Daniel's immediate concern was Israel's release from the bondage of Babylon. The greater concern was humanity's release from the bondage of sin. Daniel was about to be introduced to the sin-pardoning Messiah of prophecy, the Savior of, not just Israel, but the *world*.

Let's look at Daniel 9:24:

Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and the prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

First the angel speaks of seventy weeks, or 490 day/years, "determined" for Daniel's people. "Determined" is from the Hebrew word *chathak*, which means "amputate." The 490 years were *amputated* or *cut off* from the longer time period of 2300 years. The end of the 490 years would, among other things, "bring in everlasting righteousness." Probably not entirely sure of all that would happen, Daniel nevertheless knew that God was up to something good.

Then he learned the beginning point of the prophecy:

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. Daniel 9:25

Daniel knew nothing of a command to "restore and build Jerusalem," because it hadn't yet been given. But we do know of this command today. Historians generally agree it was actually the last of four commands given to restore Jerusalem and was the only one that granted the Jews complete autonomy. The decree, given by the Persian King Artaxerxes, came in 457 B.C. Taken from that beginning point, 490 years comes to 34 A.D.³



³ 490-34 = 26—true! But don't forget that when moving from A.D. to B.C. there is a "zero year" which causes the end point to jump forward a year to 27 A.D.

The prophecy focused on the last, seven-year section of the 490 years as bearing special significance. Imagine the 490 years as stretching across 483 years, then zooming in on seven years at the end. The prophecy identifies three markers for this seven-year period: The Baptism, the Cross, and the End.

27 A.D., the Baptism- The language used to describe Jesus' anointing as Messiah is "Messiah the Prince" (vs. 25). God marked the pivotal moment of Jesus' baptism by saying, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22; See also Dan. 9:25; Luke 3:1, 21-22). Along with the Holy Spirit appearing as a dove, all three members of the Godhead family were present at this significant life event. It was a family affair ☺

31 A.D., the Cross- Three and one-half years later Jesus would "bring an end to sacrifice and offering" (vs. 27). Jesus died at three o'clock on the 14th day of the first Jewish month. At the moment He died, "the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mark 15:38). A mysterious, invisible hand ripped that several-layers thick curtain⁴ as if it was a paper bag. This was to show that God's people no longer needed ritual sacrifices to express faith in a coming Savior, for the Messiah, the Lamb of God, the One to whom all those symbols pointed, had come. He had been slain that day on the Cross, "cut off, but not for Himself" (vs. 26). What poetic language of selfless love!

34 A.D., the End- The completion of the 490-year prophecy came three and one-half years after the Cross when the disciple Stephen preached Christ before the Sanhedrin, the governing body of the Jewish people. Foaming with rage at Stephen's straight message, they stoned him. This event sparked a general persecution of Christians, marking a final rejection of Jesus by the majority of the Jewish leaders. The rejection of the true Messiah prompted the search for the "real" messiah who would deliver them from Roman bondage. As self-proclaimed saviors multiplied, instigating rebellion against Rome, she tightened her control. Finally in A.D. 70 Roman armies leveled the city of Jerusalem, thus "desolating" and "destroying" it (See Dan. 9:26-27; Matt. 24:15).

Present at the stoning of Stephen was Saul of Tarsus, a Jewish scholar and fierce persecutor of Christians. After witnessing the guileless devotion of the martyr, Saul encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus. After his conversion, he led out in the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles (See Acts 9:1-15). And so when the focus of evangelism shifted from the Jewish nation to the Gentile world, the 490-year time period that was "determined" for the Jewish nation ended.

This doesn't mean that Jewish individuals are not still candidates for the kingdom of God. It simply means that the preaching of the gospel no longer focused on Jewish people. It went forth to Gentiles, who had been "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel" but were now "brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:12-13).

Amazing fulfillment of every detail! And this is just one of the hundreds of Messianic prophecies. God etched out His Son's life and ministry before time began. The plan to save us was precisely, carefully planned down to the minute detail.

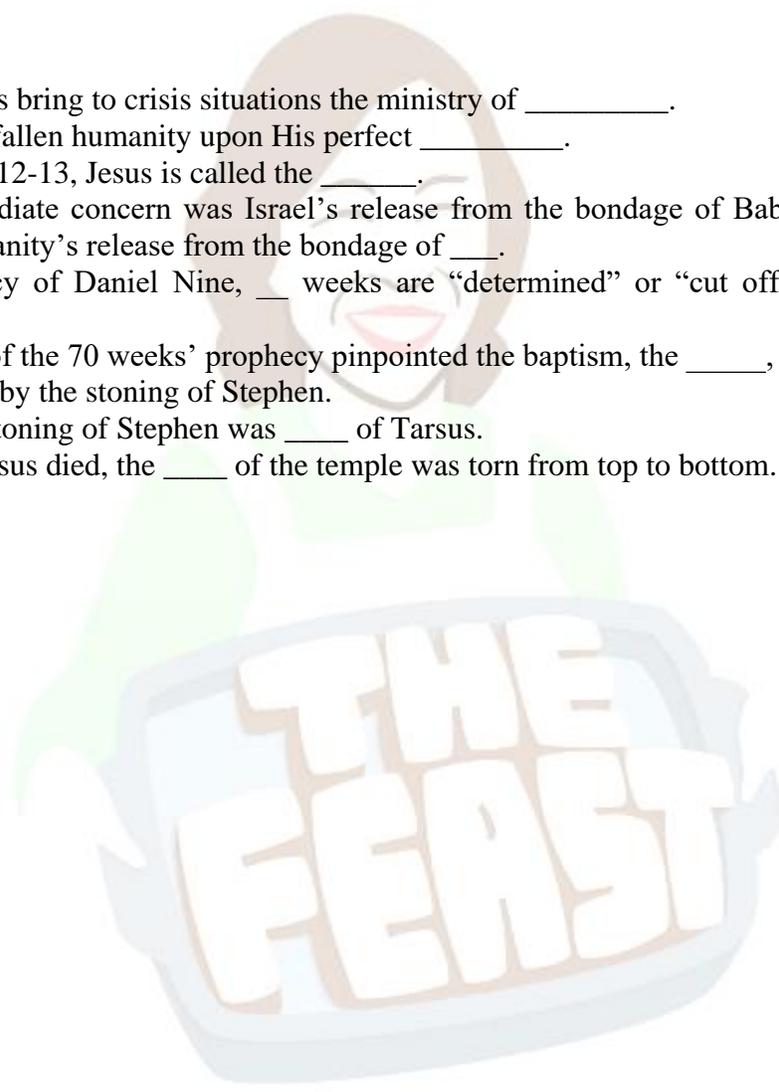
⁴ The ancient Jews said the later veil of the temple was as wide as four fingers, so that no one could possibly see into the Most Holy place.

The Takeaway

Jesus came to live and die in accordance with the eternal counsel of peace. According to God's plan and God's timing, and precisely fulfilling the prophecies uttered by Spirit-filled seers, He took our humanity upon Himself, binding His heart to ours in an eternal covenant of love, and then offered Himself on a lonely Cross so that we would never be lonely. How He longs for us to grow up in Him, look Him in the eyes, and say, "I feel so loved. Thank You."

Quiz

1. Police chaplains bring to crisis situations the ministry of _____.
2. Jesus took our fallen humanity upon His perfect _____.
3. In Zechariah 6:12-13, Jesus is called the _____.
4. Daniel's immediate concern was Israel's release from the bondage of Babylon. The greater concern was humanity's release from the bondage of ____.
5. In the prophecy of Daniel Nine, ___ weeks are "determined" or "cut off" from the larger timeline.
6. The last week of the 70 weeks' prophecy pinpointed the baptism, the _____, and the end of the prophecy marked by the stoning of Stephen.
7. Present at the stoning of Stephen was _____ of Tarsus.
8. The moment Jesus died, the _____ of the temple was torn from top to bottom.



Answer Key

1. Presence
2. Divinity
3. Branch
4. Sin
5. 70
6. Cross
7. Saul
8. Veil

